

Chronicles of Diversity

Your leadership weekly



*Palmer Lake from
Adventure center porch*

Fractured Rapture Tales

Ham & Eggs

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Tale 11 Ham & Eggs

Relatively early in my pilgrimage from corporate America to the man I am today, I had the opportunity to work very briefly in the field of business brokerage. Since approximately one third of small businesses change hands every year I thought that this might be a great service to be involved in.

My involvement came to an end when the business owners wife approached me about why I had not had any success in listing businesses for sale, the prerequisite for becoming a fully anointed business sales associate. The fact was I had absolutely no desire to walk up and down the streets cold calling on businesses until I found five parties that would list their business with me for two to ten times what they were actually worth.

Not only did I see this exercise as unnecessary, for we already had an inventory of several hundred potential sellers, but I really didn't have the time with everything else I was doing. To spend days canvassing areas already rototilled by others just weeks previous was not just stupid, it served no redeeming social value.

This trail really came to a fatal end in my brokerage career when the owners wife told me, "Jerry, you just need to be more organized in your efforts!"

Since, she and her husband thought all my efforts should be totally absorbed by my desire to make them a lot of money, I did not receive this critique with a tactful heart. The truth be known and my response confirmed, "Well, I hate to disagree with you, but I forget to do more in a day, more than you ever do."

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It was the truth, just probably not the tactful way to say it! And they never did take the time to do anything with their employees other than pound on them to conform to the marketing model that they had been given from the franchise's headquarters.

Into that context however, I did run across a business that made sense to a colleague who ran a small manufacturing business in Redmond. The business for sale made camera bags and niche merchandise similar to what Lowepro does today. As the listing agent and I presented this company to Steve, he kept asking if the current owner, was just involved, or was he committed to the business. Was this man committed to producing a profitable company, or was he just involved in playing and spending his mother's money?

Both me and my selling compatriot knew the answer to that question, but in our best effort to sell the company, we kept talking around the issue, but that seemed the only thing that Steve was interested in. Was the owner committed, or just involved. As this conversation continued, one of us finally asked, "Well Steve, could you clarify what you mean by committed and involved?"

Steve, without pause retorted, "Is he the chicken or the egg in a ham and egg breakfast. The pig is committed, the chicken is just involved!"

That my friend is the problem with Christianity today, too many chickens, not enough pigs. To put it into a context much more serious, "Are you spending your Father's resources, time, and money on yourself and your desires, or are you investing it in His work, building the church?"

Previous to my business brokerage experience, I had learned that technical problems in business are relatively easy to solve, the people problems are much more difficult. Managing operations may be a science, but managing the people who run the operations, is an art.

Only God can change wild beasts into chickens, or sheep if you like that analogy better. But the process of changing sheep, chickens, and pigs into men and women "after God's own heart" is the business of the church.

Thanks to Constantine, see it's not all our fault, there is really two classes in the church, chickens and pigs. The leaders are the pigs, and everyone else is a chicken. The way to become a pig is really not to be chicken. Thinking about it, it is a much more complex transition than from a caterpillar to a butterfly. That is only a Godly designed passage. The change from a chicken to a pig is a change of being. Pigs and chickens are entirely different animals.

There are a lot of physiological differences between chickens and pigs, an given enough space, I'm sure we could develop analogies for the most significant. The first one that comes to mind however, is the difference in the heart.

A chicken has a three chambered heart, the pig's heart has four chambers. Of all the animals, the pig's heart is the most similar to a the human heart. My aortic value, was replaced with a pig valve. The card I carry in my wallet says it is a Mosaic Porcine Heart Valve, Serial Number 27A6319091.

A chicken's heart is light and designed to fly away, the porker's heart is designed for the weight of this world. In the light of this series of rapture tales however, pigs are bound for rapture, but what about the chickens? Are chickens too busy running around like headless wonders, to be whisked away?

Pigs are a lot more like humans in that natural and also the spiritual way. Chickens, sheep, and old goats for that matter, are under the mosaic law ceremonially clean, pigs are not. Pigs must be made clean by the fulfillment of the law, by the propitiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

People don't really have chicken friends, but some of the smaller breeds of pigs, make wonderful pets. These pork bellied friends, seem to be a symbol that life is good, chickens are dirty and noisy. Pigs seem to be a witness of their personality, chickens just seem to go pecking around crowing, witnessing to their rooster prominence, even if those around them think of them as old hens.

I don't know if it is a true sample or not, but most of the Christians that I know who aren't pastors are not content in their role as church chickens. Some pastors aren't content in their role as church swine either. As I said earlier it is not all our fault. We have Constantine and almost seventeen hundred years of trained behavior to codify the difference between these barnyard neighbors. In our simplified example, the early church was not restricted in their work by their religious animal.

My nonconformist ancestors in Scotland and Ireland took this chicken-swine development to a high art form. All we need to do is to hire highly trained professional pastors, let them preach on the security of our election, give them a long summer sabbatical in Switzerland, and we are free to make money almost any legal way we choose. No pain and all gain.

The only problem with all this is we are not talking about barnyard animals we are talking about people, God's frozen chosen. Yet none of you has really any problem understanding the analogy. You might not like being compared to laity chickens and clerical swine but the symbolism is relevant, but also misleading.

It could be argued in another forum, that Constantine's actions were causative factors in the rise of western culture and individualism. Consequently, we understand this individual symbolism. We have a more difficult problem with the interactions of the barnyard community.

We believe that given enough resources we should have a cow pasture, a pig pen, a chicken coop, and an old goats retirement community. At least that way we can keep the fallout from our endeavors segregated. Mixed all together it makes a pretty potent aroma. In that segregation we have room for specialists to manage the regime. But we have no way to bring the distinct together, for over the years our peers have made us afraid of outsiders. This is true within the farm but also from farm to ranch.

How do we break down those barriers? Sacrifice! We kill the mythical animals, substitute that symbolic flesh with their real meat and have a BBQ. There is an aroma we all agree on. Properly roasted and seasoned meat can turn chicken, pigs, goats, and any other clean or unclean animals, even the wild beasts, back into people, created in the image of God.

One of the things I have noticed about BBQ is that everything else has a tendency to be pushed out, as the well roasted meat takes center stage. Alcohol, drugs, even cigarettes are just social customs that can be left in the street. As those and other social crutches disappear, humanity and with it brotherly love, can again begin to flourish.

That guy, that woman, might be a jerk out in the world, but here at the BBQ we have made a divine connection. It is true, because deep before even the mosaic law was given, God wired us not only for a need for Him, but also the understanding of the blood sacrifice as a means to that communion, with Him and with each other. Look at any culture and you see the sacrificed animal as the source of community development and celebration (worship). This doesn't come through doesn't come through evolutionary lines, but by God's design.

As usual, this week I have written some things I don't understand. Most of the time I don't have time or the guts to go back and try to understand the significance of these labors. But I do know over the last year or so, the BBQ thing has kept coming back into my thoughts and planning.

Last summer on the Bemidji missions trip we basically went to community events and invited people to come to a meeting to hear about developing Godly relationships. Those who responded were really coming to understand how to love better. Something we all need, but only a few responded.

That was this chicken's ham and egg breakfast. What comes first, as we try to show the love of God to a lost and dying world one person at a time? I think we miss the something, (our reason for being) if we only proclaim that love, and don't show it. The church really exists for one purpose only. It is not to proclaim the gospel so others might be saved from hell. The church exists to be the only true witness of love in the world. As I heard Pastor Wade say many times in Bemidji, "We need to go out there and just love on them."

I had been trying that love thing for some time with the wonderful people in my life, and also the jerks. It is the only thing that works, because many are hostile to the legalism that so much of Christianity portrays. "You think its bad outside the church, let me tell you a ham and egg story."

But hearing "go out and just love on people" over and over, reinforces the need to just celebrate you are alive, and each person is so gifted of God in totally unique ways. Through God's love in us we can help all develop those gifts, not as chickens and pigs, but distinct human personalities. Divine love is the ultimate gift on this earth, and only the Christian church can even begin to fulfill that calling. The problem is not too many chiefs and not enough indians, it is too many chickens and not enough pigs.

Last week I went over to North Central Washington, near the town of Oroville. The potential adventure center I found is the most beautiful place I have ever been too, where you could drive on a

paved road. (There is a small cloudy picture on the PDF attachment.) But I also found a town, similar in analogy to the border between the US and Mexico. This time however, the Mexican side was in the USA, and the states development was in Canada.

One of the terms I heard for this area of Canada is that it is their "Palm Springs." Because of the poor exchange rate for many years, they have had the opportunity to develop this area as a vacation paradise. While I didn't have time to explore much of this Canadian area, I have done some traveling in the region and find the natural beauty spectacular and the climate wonderful.

Oroville and the adventure center are probably 100 miles closer to Vancouver than they are to Seattle. The distance from Seattle is about the same as from Seattle to Spokane. The owner of the adventure center is a snow bird in Arizona, not Palm Springs, and will not return until about the first of April. At that time I hope to go and make an offer on the place.

This time in between, allows me to determine how God might have me finance this tremendous opportunity, not for just the adventure center, but for developing, for lack of a better term, a church planting mission. The focus of that mission would be loving on people through BBQ.

My night in Oroville I ate in a Mexican restaurant. The next day I learned the building is for sale with all the equipment. It also has a large separate dining room that could be used for church facilities for a time. The information I got from the real estate agent yesterday didn't make it clear about the status of the Mexican place that is now using the building.

The problem with planting churches, especially outside of urban areas, is for pig earning support until the church can pay its own way. With the need to prepare messages, and make a decent wage, without working at the job on Sundays, puts severe restraints on developing pigs. Food service has that potential to provide that necessary wage and time. Especially, if after the service you can have a BBQ, using the facility to love on the people and to have them love on each other.

Since I have returned to Seattle, I have finally found commercial BBQ smokers that I think would work both in fixed facilities and in mobile catering missions. This quest started soon after I was able to get around after my operation last spring. How and what you add to that central piece depends pretty much on the funds available.

This brings us back to commitment. There is very little opportunity in the way the church is now organized, to become of pig without becoming a full time pastor. Now there is a need only to get a lot of people involved in various aspects of the ministry, lots of chickens, so few pigs. Just because its always been that way, does not mean the tradition is Biblical.

The oft quoted passage from Acts where elders were appointed so the Apostles could devote time to the "prayer and the ministry of the word" (Act 6) makes some poor assumptions when brought into present ministry. Present day pastors are not the first Apostles, but fellow gentile servants of Jesus Christ, with a calling similar to Paul, the tent maker Apostle. In context of the whole New Testament, the distinction between pig and chickens should not be in the application of service, but in the management of time and resources.

Present day laity are not chickens, but also share in that same calling of Paul, in most cases in a much more real life situation than pastors. In church however, the business executive is given the opportunity only to wait tables, to drive the van, teach the children, and give money, with little input into how and where it will be spent.

What we all lost with Constantine, was the ability to change the gentile world because of false species characterizations. The chickens and the pigs are figments of our creative enterprise. But it is creative enterprise that changed the world forever in through the early church.

There is an oft quoted phrase, "Ministry is not a business." My take on that is ministry is not accountable to its stockholders. "Well, business needs to make a profit to be successful." It all depends on your measurement of profit, whether that profit is eternal gold, or temporal gold.

Are we really storing up our treasures in heaven, or are we spending our earthly blessings from God, to promote our own image of personal security? It comes down to ham and eggs for breakfast and its taste should make us sick to our stomach, because of the sour nature of our continual ingesting of personal idolatry.

I am seriously contemplating forming a for profit corporation, Wonder Springs Adventures, to allow you to invest a portion of your worldly wealth knowing that your dividends might only be compounded in the eternal. But this Adventure would be accountable not only to you, but would also seek your commitment to make it a success. The major stock holder would be Wonder Springs, a ministry that would like to plant churches in difficult areas of America, Canada, and around the world. The major theme would be loving on people through the gift of animal sacrifice and the sweet smelling aroma of Wonder Springs Barbeque.

Ps. I do have a lot of the details for this worked out, it has been a labor of joy for many years. This adventure is not the way things have been done, for it relies primarily on a company of pigs, or chickens who don't want to be chickens any more, both as investors and as employees. In light of the current state of the world is there really any other way to live than trusting in the only perfect source of all security and love?